

THE FORMATION OF THE FIRST GRAND LODGE OF FREEMASONS, GERMANY 1250.

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Chapter 5.7 of the book "The 99° of Freemasonry: Turning the Solomon Key"

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[The following short paper was discovered on the Pietre-Stones Review of Freemasonry web-site. It appears to be a portion of a chapter taken from a book by the author. It has been included as a foil to RWBro. Lewis' lecture as there are a couple of references common in each paper.

The first trouble I have, is that Klövekorn seems to assume because an Emperor became an (honorary?) member of a Lodge, that this meant these operative Lodges were speculative. Secondly, apart from RF Gould, he only offers two references of perhaps doubtful credibility. He has also come up with a new interpretation of the origin of the term Free-mason. Comments on the paper are eagerly hoped for. (Ed.)]

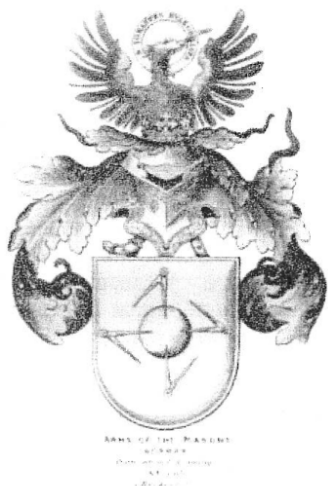
With the spread of Christianity throughout Germany and the requirement for Roman bishops to raise cathedrals, the Masonic colleges in Germany thrived. Generally designated as *Steinmetzen* or stonecutters, these Masonic fraternities raised churches and cathedrals throughout continental Europe. The society of stonecutters had within it a variety of grades and occupations. These included *Steinmaurer* or stone layers *Steinhauer* or stone hewers, as well as *Steinmetzen*, a word derived from *Stein* or stone and *Metzen*, derivative of the word *Metzel* or chisellers, a more detailed and skilful art than the hewers. The construction of *Balihutten* or lodges situated next to the churches being constructed served as design, work and sleeping quarters.

One of the earliest records of Masonic lodges is found in the German city of Hirschau (now Hirsau) in the current state of Baden-VVürttemberg. Masonic lodges instituted in the city of Hirschau in the late 11th century worked under the Benedictine order of Germany and were the first to establish the Gothic style of architecture.

As early as 1149 the first German *Zünfte* or stonemason unions developed in Magdeburg, Wurzburg, Speye and Strassburg. In 1250 the first grand lodge of Freemasons was formed in the city of Cologne ¹(Kbln) Germany. The grand lodge was formed as part of the immense undertaking to erect the cathedral of Cologne.

The first Masonic congress occurred in the city of Strassburg, Germany in the year 1275. it was formed by Grand Master Erwin von Steinbach. This was also the earliest recorded use of the symbol of Freemasons, the square and compasses. Whilst Strassburg was considered the premier grand lodge of the day, other Great Masonic lodges had already been formed in Wien, Bern and the above mentioned KOIn (Cologne); these

were called *Oberhatten* or great lodges. Several Masonic congresses were held in the city of Strassburg, including the years 1498 and 1563. At this time the first recorded Arms of the Masons of Germany were recorded depicting four compasses positioned around a pagan sun symbol and arranged in the shape of a swastika or pagan / Aryan sun- wheel. The Masonic Arms of Germany also displayed the name of St John the Evangelist, the patron Saint of German Masons,



The Oberhütte of Cologne, and its grand master, was considered the head of the Masonic lodges of all upper Germany. The grand master of Strassburg, in those days a German city, was head of Masonic lodges throughout all upper Germany, Franconia, Bavaria, Hesse and the main areas of France.

The grand lodges of Masons in Germany received support from the Church and the Monarchy. Emperor Maximilian reviewed the Masonic congress of 1275 at Strassburg and proclaimed his protection over the craft. Between 1276 and 1281 Rudolf I of Habsburg, a German king, became a member of the

Bauhütte or Lodge of St. Stephan. King Rudolf was one of the first non-operative, otherwise called *free* or *speculative* members of a Masonic lodge.

The statutes of Masons in Europe were revised in 1459 by the Ratisbonne (Regensburg) Assembly, the headquarters of the German Diet, the preliminary revisions of which had occurred in Strassburg seven years earlier². The revisions described the requirement to test foreign brothers prior to their acceptance in lodge via an established (seemingly international or European) method of greeting.

The first grand assembly of Masons in Europe occurred in the year 1535, in the city of Cologne in Germany. Here the bishop of Cologne, Hermann V, assembled 19 Masonic lodges to establish the Charter of Cologne written in Latin. The first grand lodges of Masons were present, which was customary for the time, and included the grand lodge of Cologne, Strassburg, Vienna, Magdeburg and Zurich. The mother grand lodge of Cologne, with its grand master was considered the premier grand lodge of Europe.

After the invention of the printing press, the Masons (*Steinmetzen*) of Germany assembled in Ratisbonne in 1464 and printed the first Rules and Statutes of the Fraternity of Stone Cutters of Strassburg *Ordnung der Steinmetzen*. These regulations were approved and sanctioned by succeeding Emperors such as Charles V and Ferdinand.

The German friar Martin Luther, and his protest against the injustices and hypocrisies of the Catholic Church in 1517, gave rise to Protestantism. This liberalised some of the Masonic lodges of the time. The Strassburg Cathedral became Lutheran in 1525 and many others followed.

In 1563 the *Ordinances and Articles of the Fraternity of Stonemasons* were renewed at the Chief Lodge at Strassburg on St Michael's Day. These regulations demonstrate three important links to modern Masonry. Firstly, apprentices were termed 'free' on completion of service to their Master, which undoubtedly is the origin of the word 'Freemason'. Secondly, the fraternal nature of the lodge was depicted in a range of regulations such as services to the sick, or the practice of teaching a brother without cost, such as under Article 14. Thirdly the Freemasons used a secret handshake as means of identification.

Two articles from the regulations indicating these points are:

"No Master shall teach a Fellow anything for Money".

XIV. And no craftsman or master shall take money from a fellow for showing or teaching him anything touching masonry. In like manner, no warden or fellow shall show or instruct any one for money in carving as aforesaid. Should, however, one wish to instruct or teach another, he may well do it, one piece for the other, or for fellowship sake, or to serve their master thereby.

LIV. In the first place, every apprentice when he has served his time, and is declared free, shall promise the craft, on his truth and honour, in lieu of oath, under pain of losing his right to practise masonry, that he will disclose or communicate the mason's greeting and grip to no one, except to him to whom he may justly communicate it; and also that he will write nothing thereof."³

The Strassburg ordinances stipulated that entry into the fraternity was by free will and clearly indicated the three grades of Entered Apprentice, Fellow and Master in the German Masonic fraternity. They required the taking of an oath and for masons to meet in chapters called 'Kappitet'. The ordinances instruct masons not to teach Masonry to non-masons.

That German or Teutonic Masonic lodges and grand lodges existed prior to the formation of the grand lodge of England in 1717 is clear, as is their use of secret handshakes, the use of the term 'free' and their acceptance of non-operatives. The use of allegory and layered symbolism, which makes the Masonic fraternal system unique was also evident in German lodges of the time as displayed in the stone carvings and architectural styles of the churches and abbeys they built.

From the Web Page www.klovekorn.com:

The 99° of Freemasonry supports the theory that the seed of modern Freemasonry, was not linked to Knight: Templar or English Freemasonry, but originated with the Masonic Institutions of Germany, who in turn, had received their Masonic knowledge from earlier Masonic organisations. This claim is supported via 7 main points of evidence.

1. That the Regius Manuscript, the Oldest (reputable) surviving Masonic text in Britain, makes reference to the four crowned martyrs, which are unequivocally linked to the legend of Masons under the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, a Masonic tradition originating in Germany not Britain.
2. The existence and earliest recorded use of the square and compasses (the fraternal sign of Freemasonry) of the arms of German Masonic Bodies.
3. The existence of highly organized Masonic institutions (Steinmetzen) in Germany in the 13th century, such as the Grand Lodge (OberhOtte) of Strassburg and KOIn (Cologne), and several subordinate Masonic lodges which not only worked in stone but also included allegorical Masonic teachings within their guilds.
4. The election of a Grand Master of Masons in the 13th century and the establishment of grades of apprentices, fellows and master masons in Germany in the 12th century and earlier.
5. The establishment of printed Statutes and Rules of the Masonic Order in Germany before the establishment of written Masonic statutes in Britain.
6. The inclusion of non-operative (or speculative) members, such as King Rudolf I into Masonic Lodges in Germany in the 13th century,
7. The first large-scale recorded requirement for Masonic lodges to utilise a secret method of greeting and 'grip'.

The 99° of Freemasonry also analyses the use of the square and compasses, as allegorical moral symbols of masonry, in works of art within German culture of this period, further evidence of Masonic philosophy within German culture and continental Europe in this period.

Whilst many Freemasons have been 'conditioned' to accept that the origins of Masonry stem from England or Scotland, as the great modern day Masonic organisations are deeply interconnected within this geographical area, the 99° of Freemasonry sheds new light on Masonic history and urges, if not inspires readers to look to the continent of Europe as the great seed of Masonry.

1. Rebold, Emmanuel & Fletcher, Brennan J (Ed), A General History of Freemasonry in Europe - based upon the ancient documents relating to, and the monuments erected by this fraternity, from its foundation in the year 715 BC to the Present Time, Cincinnati, published by Geo. B Fessenden 1867, reprint by Kessinger Publishing USA.

2 Naudon, Paul, The Secret History of Freemasonry Its Origins and Connection to the Knights Templar. USA. Translated by Jon Graham. Inner Traditions, Rochester, Vermont, Copyright 1991 by Editions Dervev, English Translation copyright 2005 by Inner Traditions International. Originally published in French under the title 'Les origines de la Franc-Maçonnerie L, nacre et le metier, Paris. ISBN 1-59477-028-X, page 6. page 174.

3 Gould, Robert Freke, The History of Freemasonry, Its Antiquities, Symbols, Constitutions Customs etc. Volume 1 T.C. t E. C. Jack, Grange Publishing Works, Edinburgh, page 122.